



A Sense of Smell

By Roby Wentz

THE CIC SERGEANT said, "I'm sorry, Captain, but that's what headquarters told me to tell you. Just a quick report on anything at all unusual in your area—anything"

Captain Traeger's face flushed a dull red. The sergeant was a lanky red-haired Vermonter with lean intelligent features and that air about him of knowing more than he chose

to tell which is the trademark of CIC men.

Just like any dick on the Force in civil life, The Captain thought tiredly—which this guy probably was.

Abruptly he swung around in the swivel chair which had once been the official seat of the *bürgermeister* of Dortenheim.

"Steen!" he called.

Corporal Steen, the company clerk,

Based on a radio script originally written for the CBS radio program **SUSPENSE**

by

SYLVIA RICHARDS

stuck his head inside the door. "Yes, sir?"

"Tell Sergeant Dukes I want to see him."

"Sir," Corporal Steen said, "Sergeant Dukes isn't here right now."

"Well, where in hell is he?"

"Well, Captain, he's well, Herr Stoeckel down the street, his cow was about to have a calf, you know, sir. And she's having trouble, I guess. Stoeckel was in here a while ago, hollering and—"

"I see," Traeger said acidly. "The American Army of Occupation in Germany now includes midwifery to cattle among its other duties."

He swung back to face Sergeant Pepper and meditate on the problems of being the town commander of Dortenheim, two hundred and seventy-three assorted buildings in doubtful repair and nineteen-hundred and two even more assorted Germans, in still worse repair, the whole picturesquely situated on the Rhine River behind the usual crumbling gray medieval round tower.

"I don't know what they want at your headquarters," he said sharply. "I'll cooperate; counter-intelligence knows that. They ought to know that they don't have to send sergeants running down here to alert me. Obviously I'll report anything unusual. If that's their only reason for—"

He stopped and passed a hand over his face.

"Sergeant," he said, "I didn't mean to pull rank. It's just that—"

"Yes, sir," The CIC man said and smiled. "I know."

"Cigarette?" the Captain said.

They lit up. After the first puff Traeger looked keenly at the Sergeant. "All right, now, the hell with security. Is something up, or isn't it? They didn't send you down here just to tell me to keep doing what I'm doing. So why can't they tell me what it is?"

The Sergeant fingered his cigarette. "This is just between us, Captain, but I can tell you, definitely, something is up. I honestly don't know what. But I think it's something more than little werewolves putting sugar into gas tanks."

He was silent a moment. Then he added, "This is pure speculation on my part; comes from no official source. There's a persistent rumor Ernst Gortmann's hiding somewhere in the Rhineland."

"Gortmann!" the Captain ejaculated.

The idea that the notorious Nazi, Hitler's heir-apparent, might be hiding in his little bailiwick of Germany presented itself in mixed colors.

Some believed Gortmann had met death during the collapse; many more doubted it. The latter school inclined to the theory that he was alive and in hiding inside the Fatherland, waiting for a chance to get away to Spain or the Argentine.

Things had been so peaceful in Dortenheim...

"Wow," the Captain said. "In my territory?"

"Could be."

"All right. I still don't know anything. But I'll alert all guard details and—"

There was a knock on the door,

it opened and Corporal Steen came in again.

"Sir," he said, "Frau Becker is here."

The Captain looked at his watch.

"What does *she* want at five in the afternoon?"

"Well, it's something about her cows."

Captain Traeger compressed his lips. "I'm not in the Infantry, oh, no. I'm in the livestock business." He sighed. "What about her cows?"

"As near as I can tell, sir, she wants a pass for 'em."

"Wants to put 'em on furlough, eh?"

Sergeant Pepper smiled.

"No, sir. She wants to take 'em onto an island, sir. An island in the river."

"For heaven's sake, why?"

"Well, there's a bull on the island, sir."

When Traeger stopped laughing, he asked: "Is the bull hers, too?"

"I guess so, sir."

Traeger looked at the CIC man. "There's something 'unusual' for your headquarters, Sergeant."

Pepper smiled. "Who's the woman?"

"Frau Becker? Not a bad one; pretty good, for a German. Pretty goodlooking, too, if it comes to that. She's been very helpful, here in Dortenheim."

"De-nazification?"

Traeger nodded. "She doesn't like Nazis. She gave us a lot of dope on who the active people were, here."

He turned to the clerk.

"Tell her we'll fix it up in the

morning. It's nearly supper-time."

They heard Steen's voice through the open door in a mixture of English and German, relaying the information. He was interrupted by a woman's voice in halting English.

"Please. It must tonight be, you will tell *der Hauptmann*?"

"*Der Hauptmann* says *kommen sie* in the morning—*morgen*," Steen insisted. "Okay then. *Verstehen*?"

"Ja, ja, *ich verstehne*. But please, it is necessary tonight, yes?"

"These damned Germans!" Traeger exclaimed. He got to his feet and went to the door. "Frau Becker," he said.

"Ah, *Herr Hauptmann*!" The attractive, dark-haired woman beside Steen's table turned quickly. "Please, is important that tonight goes the cows..."

"You mean the bull can't wait?"

Steen flushed and Frau Becker said, "Please?" her face blank.

"Yes, yes," Traeger said. "Now—" he made shooing motions with his hands at the woman. "—you go home—*gehen sie im haus*. In the morning—yes." He nodded his head vigorously. "Morning—*morgen*!"

Frau Becker stared. Then she turned, without a word, and went out. The Captain looked at Steen, shook his head and turned back into his office.

"Now what possible difference," he said to Sergeant Pepper, "could it make if the cows get there tonight or tomorrow?"

HE STARED OUT the window at the broad, eddying waters of

the fast-rolling gray-green Rhine. The Captain's office was on the upper floor of a waterfront *Gasthaus*, a combination tavern-hotel. The windows gave on a good view of the great river, cold-looking now that the sun was behind the steep wooded hills of the west bank.

"I certainly wouldn't want to start ferrying a bunch of cows over to an island at this time of day," he remarked.

"Neither would I," Pepper said.

"These Germans!" the captain said again, shaking his head. Well, Sergeant, will you have supper with us? I think we used up the last of the Spam yesterday." He sniffed. "Smells pretty good, from here. Roast beef, I'd say."

Sergeant Pepper stood up and sniffed, too. "Roast *veal*, Captain. Thanks a lot, but it's a fifty-kilometer run back and I never have been keen about night driving around here."

The Captain made a sound of derision. "I've driven hundreds of miles at night, all over the American zone, and never a mishap. Well, we'll be on the lookout, Sergeant."

"Thanks, sir." He stood silent a moment, and Captain Traeger said. "Was there something . . . ?"

"Not a thing," Pepper said. "I was just wondering why Frau Becker's bull should be on an island." Then he smiled and saluted, "Bye, Captain."

Traeger returned his salute. "See you soon."

The door in the outer office banged open and an excited Teutonic voice,

high and thin, shrilled out "*Wo ist der Hauptmann?*"

Pepper laughed. "Where is the Captain?" he echoed, chuckling. "Here you go again, Captain."

Steen was protesting excitedly to a little pinch-faced German wearing wrap puttees and a green Tyrolean hat, as they came into the outer office. He turned to the Captain with a despairing gesture.

"This man is Joachim Stuhl," he said. "It's about those cows of Frau Becker's."

"Ja, ja," shrilled the little man, "Frau Becker!" He erupted German like a fountain and Steen spread his hands helplessly. "I can't make out a word he says," he admitted.

"I'm getting it," Sergeant Pepper said. As the Captain and Steen turned to him in surprise, he shot a couple of crisply-enunciated queries in German and got excited answers.

Pepper quieted the hard-breathing little man and explained: "Herr Stuhl now emerges—according to himself—as the owner of the bull on the island to whom Frau Becker wishes to transport her cows. It seems Frau Becker doesn't own all the cows; one of them belongs to a man named August Ley, a strong Nazi sympathizer, according to Herr Stuhl."

"That's funny," Captain Traeger said. "Frau Becker never mentioned anyone named Ley."

"Anyway," Pepper said, "Herr Stuhl refuses to let his bull have anything to do with the cow of August Ley. Frau Becker's cows, okay; but August Ley's cow, no, a thousand

times no."

"Hm," Traeger said. "Ask him why he hates Ley so much."

Pepper questioned Stuhl.

"He says Ley was an overseer for foreign slave labor gangs in the dye factory down the river at Oberbrücken and a rather nasty character all around."

"Looks like I ought to have a look at Herr Ley," the Captain murmured. "Tell him we'll discuss the whole thing in the morning. Tell him to come back then."

When Joachim Stuhl had departed, muttering, and Pepper's jeep had roared away along the Rheinstrasse toward Frankfurt, the Captain sighed and started downstairs to the dining room of the *Gasthaus zum Strobl* where he, his subordinate officers and those enlisted members of his headquarters not on duty took their meals. Captain Traeger believed in officers and men of a command sharing their meals in the same room.

He was about to enter the dining room when the street door banged open, admitting First Sergeant Dukes in a breathless condition.

The first sergeant was a man ordinarily not much given to excitement, being a taciturn, thin-mouthed Texan, but as he entered he was breathing hard. The Captain eyed him with affection and amusement.

"What's the matter, Sergeant?" he inquired. "Hard delivery? I hope mother and child are both doing well?"

"Sir—" gasped Sergeant Dukes, saluting.

"You ought to send the medics

down on jobs like that," the Captain continued, kindly. "Baby-snatching for cows isn't quite a first sergeant's—"

"Sir," the first sergeant said, "There's—there's been a murder."

Captain Traeger, about to make another obstetrical jest, did a double take.

"A murder . . . ?" he echoed. "Are you kidding, Sergeant?"

"No, sir, I ain't kidding at all." Dukes was under control, now. "I mean a murder."

The Captain stiffened. "One of our own . . . ?"

"No, sir. A German, sir. Here in town."

"A German," the Captain repeated. He scowled thoughtfully. "Get his name, Sergeant?"

"Yes, sir. I stationed two men with the body, sir."

"Good. Who is it?"

"The man's name is August Ley, sir."

"August Ley!"

Captain Traeger said nothing for a few seconds.

"Where was he found?" he asked finally. "Who found him?"

"The body," Sergeant Dukes answered, "was found behind Joachim Stuhl's barn, by Mrs. Stuhl. He was stabbed, sir."

"Joachim Stuhl," the Captain repeated, in an amazed voice. "Sergeant," he said, "take a detail and place both the Stuhls under arrest. Corporal Steen!"

"Yes, sir."

"Get me Frankfurt—CIC headquarters."

THE ROARING engine of the blunted, rusty LCVP slackened its furious beat as the boat swung in toward the shore of the long, flat, wooded island.

Sergeant Pepper eyed the blank mass of trees interestedly. He looked over at Frau Irma Becker, sitting quietly on an upended "ten-in-one" rations box. Her face was in repose; she did not look worried, only faintly puzzled. She wore a borrowed GI field jacket over her print dress, for the noonday air was cold and windy on the river.

She *was* a goodlooking baby, Pepper told himself.

Captain Traeger was scanning the island from alongside Pepper. Two soldiers in field jackets and combat boots, carrying Garands, stood near the engineer, looking bored.

The GI engineer cut the engine and the LCVP coasted gently behind her bow-wave until her bottom scraped against the island and she came to rest, with a pukka-ta-pukka from the now idling engine. The ramp fell with a jarring thump and they walked ashore, Sergeant Pepper last.

"Now," Traeger was saying kindly to Frau Becker, "let's see this bull."

"Please," Frau Becker said, "I do not know where. He is here, yes." Her gesture took in the entire island.

On Traeger's order, they spread out and moved through the woods, Frau Becker with the Captain. The island was not very broad, perhaps 150 yards at its widest point, and the trees were smallish, with straight stems. There was little underbrush

and they could see each other through the trees as they moved up the island. Presently there was a crashing sound from behind a clump of low bushes.

They all heard it; the two soldiers looked toward it and Sergeant Pepper's hand went to the butt of the .45 he wore.

As they watched, a small yellowish-brown bull ambled negligently out from behind the bushes and regarded them mildly.

"That settles that," Captain Traeger said. "We now have one bull, M-1, found." He looked at Sergeant Pepper. One of the GIs laughed.

"Not a bad place to keep a bull, at that," Pepper said. "He can't go far, plenty of feed, plenty of water." He walked around behind the screen of bushes where the animal had been.

"Hello!" he said.

Traeger came over and said, "Well, what do you know!"

There was a crude lean-to, hardly three feet high, behind the bush. It was thatched with leafy branches on which the bull obviously had been dining at the moment of discovery.

On the ground alongside the shelter were five or six empty Portuguese sardine tins.

Traeger spoke, "Probably some displaced person used this for awhile."

"Those tins aren't rusty at all," Pepper said. "The labels are nice and fresh." He bent swiftly and with one finger scooped a crumb of fish from one of the cans and tasted it. A faintly disgusted expression crossed Traeger's face.

"We lose more damned sergeants that way," he said.

"Not bad," the Sergeant grinned. "Very nice and fresh, too, Captain. This camp hasn't been vacant long."

Traeger said nothing. The Sergeant glanced at Frau Becker. She stood with her back against a tree, watching silently, her face empty. He stepped in front of the lean-to. "Excellent view of Dortenheim from here," he commented. "Have a look, Captain."

Traeger joined him. It was true. From the lean-to a part of the town was clearly visible down a natural vista in the woods.

"Frau Becker!" Sergeant Pepper said, in German, "Will you come here, please?"

She joined him, her dark eyes questioning. He pointed across the swirling gray water at the town. "Can you see your house from here, Frau Becker?"

She looked first at him, then at the scene down the vista, and shook her head. "No," she said, "please, my house is farther to the right." She paused and looked again.

"I can see from here," she added, "the house of Joachim Stuhl. You see—with the three gables?"

"Hey!" the Captain said, when Pepper translated. "How about that! We find Ley dead last night at Stuhl's place. Now Stuhl's disappeared, we can see Stuhl's house from..."

He broke off and looked a little helpless. "Well, I don't know just what it proves, but it sure ties up, some way."

"It doesn't tell us who was eating sardines here, probably as recently as last night," Sergeant Pepper said. "Gad," he remarked, "but those Portuguese sardines are good. I love 'em. Haven't seen any since I left the States. Wonder who'd have any around *here*?"

He picked up one of the tins and inspected it. With a thumbnail he nicked off a bit of something from one corner, rubbed it in the palm of his hand, and smelled of it.

"There's a couple of questions I'd like to ask, Captain," he said, "but they'll wait 'till we get back in town."

"Okay," the Captain said, slowly. He looked around as if reluctant to leave the island. "Okay, let's go," he said. "By the way, tell her she can't bring her cows over to visit the bull for awhile, will you? Let's go."

THE CAPTAIN said "It beats the hell out of me."

They were back in his office and it was late in the afternoon. Sergeant Pepper, still wearing his overseas cap, planted a combat-booted foot on the windowsill and peeled two or three dead brown leaves off the sole. He put them into the wastebasket and continued to stare at the broad river glinting in the evening light beyond the row of pollarded trees along the little waterfront promenade.

"It sure smelled good in those woods out there," he said, "Smelled just like the Green Mountains in Vermont. I love smells."

"You can have 'em," the Captain

said, "Especially German smells."

"I can have as much fun with my nose," the sergeant said, "as some people get out of tasting things." He sighed. "Well, I wonder what our little trip over to the island got us, huh?"

"What's the sardine can for?" the Captain asked.

Sergeant Pepper poked the empty tin lying on a corner of the Captain's desk. "Damned if I know," he said.

"We've got to make some kind of a report on all this," the Captain proceeded. When the Sergeant said nothing, he added, "Looks to me like we've gotten wound up in a local feud. Stuhl hated Ley, Stuhl got a chance to kill Ley, and did it, and scrambled."

"Be nice if it were that simple," commented Pepper.

"It doesn't seem very complicated to me," said the Captain. "Stuhl's disappeared. That in itself . . ."

"An admission of guilt? Maybe. Seems pretty odd to me though, sir, for Stuhl to walk right out of your office, go straight home and kill Ley. Figure it out: Stuhl's house is two streets from here. Took him at least three minutes to walk it, if he didn't loiter.

"It couldn't have been more than six—or seven—minutes after he left us that your first sergeant—what's his name?"

"Dukes."

"Sergeant Dukes rushed in to report Ley's murder. That gives seven minutes, tops, for Stuhl to get home, kill Ley, and for Sergeant Dukes to

hear about it and get here with the news. Stuhl's wife found the body?"

"So she says," the Captain answered. "She ran out in the street, screaming, and found Sergeant Dukes going by. Dukes gets around," he added. "He knows everybody in town. I think these krauts like him."

"Mm. Well, maybe Stuhl did it, but if he did, he gets credit from me for one of the fastest, neatest jobs on record. And a getaway to top it off."

"Mind you," he added, "I'm not saying Stuhl's innocent. On circumstantial evidence he'd hang. But I think, sir, we'll make a mistake if we just kiss this murder off as a row between neighbors in Dornheim."

"What do you mean, Sergeant?"

Pepper exhaled gustily.

"I'm not sure what I mean," he said flatly.

"You think maybe it has a bearing on this other situation . . . Gortmann?"

"Well, I don't know, sir. There are some plenty queer angles to this. This Frau Becker—you say she has a pretty good record?"

"As good as anyone in town," Traeger answered promptly. "When I first came here she was mighty helpful. She had dope on the local Nazis that no one else had."

"Wonder how she got it?" Pepper asked.

The Captain looked startled. "Well, I don't know. All I can say is, she helped us round 'em up. That much is sure. I think you're making a mistake to be suspicious of her, Ser-

geant. After all, she's not involved in anything, except in that screwy story of Stuhl's, about the cows. And anything *he* says"

He gestured eloquently.

"Well, of course, Captain, your assurance on Frau Becker is—"

He broke off in mid-sentence and listened. Captain Traeger raised his head slightly and listened too.

The voices shouting were German. They came nearer, to the clattering cadence of wooden soles on cobblestones. There was a swelling undercurrent of voices, some near, some far, spelling "crowd."

Somewhere nearby a woman screamed.

The Captain was at the window beside Pepper; they both saw the first of the men and boys come running along the waterfront street toward their building, crying to one another as they ran.

The two Americans looked at each other.

"Never a dull moment," the Captain grunted. "Okay, let's go see."

Sergeant Pepper followed him downstairs, the Captain adjusting his overseas cap with both hands as they clattered down. Out of doors, on the front steps of the *Gasthaus zum Strobl*, they halted and took in the scene.

A GI guard who a moment before had been standing outside the doorway at order arms now was walking slowly toward a gathering semicircle of Germans, his rifle at port.

"Fall back, you kraut bastards!" His mid-Western voice grated harshly on the chill, early-evening air.

"Fall back! Go on, raus, damn you!"

Several of the men shouted something and Sergeant Pepper's hands clenched suddenly.

"My God!" he breathed.

The Captain was speaking, crisply and coolly. "They're not on a rampage; they're just excited about something. Hold 'em as they are, Casey," he said to the guard.

His eyes flicked over the men down on the cobblestones and settled on one.

"Herr Doktor!" he commanded.

"*Kommen sie hier!*"

A tall old man in a long black coat, wearing huge white moustaches, came obediently up the steps, clicked his heels and bowed low, his hands clasped in front of him. "*Herr Hauptmann!*"

His voice trembled as he spoke.

"*Herr Doktor,*" the Captain said sternly, "what is the meaning of this? It is *verboten* to assemble in the street!"

"*Ja, Herr Hauptmann.*" The old man bowed again.

"Speak English!" ordered the Captain sharply.

"*Ja, Herr Hauptmann.*" Please, they mean no harm, sir. They are excited. A terrible—"

His voice faltered.

"A terrible thing has happened," he finished weakly.

"What thing?"

The old man was trembling all over but he finally spoke.

"An American soldier is—dead."

For several seconds there was complete silence. The sergeant thought

sickly, oh Lord, now we're in for it, but good.

Without taking his eyes from the street, the Captain barked "Sergeant Dukes!"

Dukes must be a good first sergeant, Pepper thought. Company commanders who call for the first sergeant first really lean on them.

"Sergeant Dukes!" called the Captain again, more loudly.

An officer, a young platoon leader, spoke from the open door behind the Captain. "Sir, Sergeant Dukes isn't here."

"Well, where is he . . ."

He saw the look on the old German's face, then, and his voice trailed away.

"Sergeant Dukes?" he almost whispered.

It was a question to the German.

"*Herr Hauptmann*," babbled the old man frantically, "I swear it, it could not have been one of us here . . ." He faltered, eyes wide, lips trembling, for the Captain's face was terrible to look upon. He raised his hand; for a split second Sergeant Pepper thought he would strike the German. Then he dropped his hand. Pepper heard him groan softly.

Two Americans, carrying carbines, came around the corner of the building at a dead run. They saw the crowd, halted an instant, then, taking in the tableau on the steps above them, they slung their carbines like good soldiers, marched through the crowd to the Captain, and saluted him.

"Sir," one of them began, "we

was coming back from the—"

It broke the tension.

"Where is he?" Captain Traeger snapped.

The soldier jumped. "Why, sir, he's—"

The other soldier spoke. "I can take you there, sir," he said. "It's that old courtyard 'longside of a church, on the edge o' town—near the old fertilizer works."

"Did you say 'fertilizer?'" Sergeant Pepper asked.

Captain Traeger shot an angry look at him.

"Jansen," he addressed the soldier, "Take a detail to Sergeant Dukes' body."

His voice broke a little as he spoke his first sergeant's name. "See that it's not disturbed in any way. It's not to be touched."

"Yes, sir."

The Captain turned quickly into the building. "Lieutenant Hawkins," he told the young officer in the entry way, "Clear the streets. Tell the bastards to get in their houses and stay in. Anyone caught on the streets will be arrested."

"Captain," Sergeant Pepper began, "can you—"

"Sergeant, I haven't time to talk to you now. You should be calling your own headquarters about this. I'm getting in touch with the provost-marshal in Frankfurt."

"Yes, sir," Sergeant Pepper said.

AT TEN that night, Sergeant Pepper came into the tavern and mounted the stairs to Captain Traeger's outer office. He sat down, took

off his cap, let out a long breath and got a cigarette from his pocket.

The sergeant lit his cigarette. At the second puff, voices rose from the ground floor, speaking loudly over trampling footsteps.

" . . . where'd you get him, Joe?"

"He was just walkin' along the streets, pretty as you please."

"Please, I must see *der Kapitan* Traeger . . ."

"What d'ye think, Joe?"

Sergeant Pepper walked out on the landing.

Below, in the entry, a slight blond German was in the custody of a brace of sturdy GIs wearing blue-and-white MP arm-bands.

The German was Joachim Stuhl.

"Well, *well*," Sergeant Pepper said softly, to himself, his eyes shining, "What about *this*?"

"Bring him up, fellas," he called.

The soldier named Joe looked up at him. "Who might you be, soldier?" he wanted to know.

"He's CIC," the other one said.

"Please," Joachim Stuhl babbled, in German, recognizing Pepper, "I have important news for the Captain!"

Pepper came down the stairs. "And your news?" he queried, in German.

"I know who killed the American sergeant and where he is hiding."

"Where?"

"In the old fertilizer factory."

Sergeant Pepper drew thoughtfully on his cigarette. After several moments he said, "How do you happen to know this?"

"Please, I will tell you. Yesterday, when I went home from seeing

the Captain, I went out behind my barn. There I found August Ley. I surprised him in a very strange action—he was waving a red handkerchief, apparently at someone on the river, although I could see no boats.

"When Ley saw me he got very angry; he attacked me and knocked me down. He would have choked me to death except that I got open my spring clasp-knife, and stabbed him."

Joachim Stuhl's voice quavered. "I guess I killed him. I was very frightened. I ran away as fast as I could and hid."

"Where?"

Stuhl drew a long breath. "In the fertilizer factory."

"Ah!" Sergeant Pepper said. "Go on."

"As you know, the factory has not worked since the collapse of the Reich. It is empty. I hid in a room which opened off a gallery that runs along one side of the building. I have been hiding there last night and all day today.

"Tonight, a little after dark, I heard voices below me; I crept out onto the gallery. Down below are store-rooms, without ceilings on them. Lying on the gallery, I could see into them. In one were two men with flashlights; I could see them hiding weapons—some rifles and a pistol or two—under the bags of fertilizer in the store-room. They replaced the bags over the guns, they put out their lights and lay down to sleep." Stuhl drew a long breath. "As soon as I dared, I got out of

the factory. They are there, now, the two men. I am sure they are the men who——"

"Where did you go, then, Herr Stuhl?"

"To Frau Irma Becker's house."

"Why didn't you come directly here?"

"I was still frightened. I had killed a man. I knew that Frau Becker is a good woman. I also knew that she has the goodwill of the Captain. I asked her to come here and tell him my story."

Stuhl sighed. "But she refused. She insisted I must come by myself and tell my own story. She said the Captain is just; he will protect one who speaks the truth."

"Why didn't you wait until the order to stay off the streets was lifted?"

Stuhl looked crafty. "Frankly, I think Frau Becker did not want any searching parties to find me in her house."

Sergeant Pepper nodded non-committally.

"You have done well, Herr Stuhl," he said gravely. He turned and ran upstairs.

A few moments later he came down again, wearing a helmet and buckling on a pistol belt. With him were Captain Traeger and a stout jolly-looking major in eyeglasses. Both officers wore side-arms.

The Captain spoke briefly to the non-com in the entryway.

"Give Sergeant Pepper a detail of six men. Helmets and rifles. Bayonets."

They waited while the detail was

routed out and assembled. Joachim Stuhl eyed the little party with quivering anxiety.

"You are going now to the factory?" he demanded of Pepper.

The strange major looked at the little German and grinned.

"Don't worry, Stuhl," the sergeant said cheerily. "We'll handle it."

"But—but," Stuhl faltered, "there is danger. Perhaps you should take more men..."

"We'll handle it," Pepper repeated. "All ready, sir," he said. He followed the officers out at the head of the detail.

In the streets of Dortenheim it was pitch-dark. From other parts of the town came an occasional faint shout or the sharp bark of a sentry's challenge. Down-river a locomotive tooted shrilly.

They were challenged repeatedly as they made their way through the narrow, cobbled streets to the house of Frau Irma Becker.

The door was heavy and narrow, at the top of three steps. Captain Traeger knocked and they waited. From the shuttered, silent house no sound issued. It was as quiet as the other tall, peak-roofed houses along the street.

Traeger knocked again, more heavily.

"Oh, well," the major said. He tried the door. It was locked. Producing his service pistol he placed the muzzle against the lock and fired twice. The roar of the shots echoed thunderously among the dark houses.

"Tell your men to wait here, Ser-

geant," the major said.

They stepped into the narrow hallway. Pepper shot the beam of his electric torch into a parlor and the light touched dark carved furniture, rugs, clocks.

There was no one in the room.

A demoniac whoop sounded close by, a wild, thin guffaw, and the three men jumped as one.

Then Traeger laughed nervously and pointed to a little wooden bird on a clock madly shrilling the hour of eleven.

"This whole business is cuckoo," he pronounced.

"Listen!" Pepper said.

They all heard, in the sudden quiet, the urgent, wordless gurglings coming from behind red curtains in a doorway opening toward the rear of the house.

The sergeant walked through the curtains.

"Well, well!" he exclaimed.

The blue-white beam of the torch bathed Frau Irma Becker—a most undignified Frau Becker, her eyes staring at them above the straight back of a kitchen chair to which she had been lashed hand and foot. Frau Becker's hands were cinched behind her back; cords bound her torso tightly against the chair's upright back; her skirts were up above her knees, her legs were wound around the chair, and a handkerchief gagged her mouth.

She was uttering mewling grunts.

While Sergeant Pepper thoughtfully appraised her unexceptionable knees, the Captain opened his knife and began slashing the ropes.

"DID YOU recognize any of the men who tied you up, Frau Becker?" Sergeant Pepper asked, in German.

Frau Irma Becker smoothed her dark hair with both hands and spoke indignantly. "I did!"

"How many of them were there?"

"There was only one man—Joachim Stuhl."

"Stuhl!" The sergeant permitted his eyebrows to climb. While the major translated rapidly for Captain Traeger's benefit, the sergeant asked:

"How is it that such a small man as Herr Stuhl was able to secure your cooperation in this, single-handed?"

Frau Becker snorted. "See for yourself!"

She parted the hair at the back of her skull to reveal a blue-tinged swelling. "When I came to—this."

She flung out a hand at the slashed cords lying on the floor.

"Suppose you tell us exactly what happened."

"Today about three hours after noon, the man Stuhl entered my house without knocking. I was sitting in this room; I looked up suddenly and there he was—she pointed—"in that doorway. Naturally I was terribly frightened. The man is a fugitive, a murderer."

"He was in an excited state. He swore to me that he had killed Ley in self-defense. Then he begged that I intercede for him with the American military authorities, because, he said, it is well-known that I have the trust of the Americans."

She looked rather appealingly at the three men, as though for con-

firmation. None of them said anything for a moment. Then the sergeant asked:

"What did you answer him?"

"I told him I couldn't afford to risk my good name in such a business. I told him that the Americans are just and that if he gave himself up to them and told the truth, all would be well."

"What did he say to that?"

"He begged again that I go to the Captain—," she nodded at Traeger—"and speak for him." She paused. "I now think it was a ruse to get rid of me. I refused. Then, suddenly, he struck me with something; I lost consciousness and when I came to I was as you found me."

"I see," Pepper thought for a moment. "Then what?"

"As I became conscious again," Frau Becker said, her eyes growing wide as she told about it, "I could hear voices in my kitchen. Then was when I heard them say, Sergeant, that they were planning a terrible thing."

"What thing?"

"An awful thing. They were planning to booby-trap the old fertilizer works and lure a great many Americans into the place. Then they would die."

She looked up suddenly. "Tell me—has it—did they—?"

"All is well, Frau Becker," the major said quietly. "Proceed."

"A little while after that," Frau Becker said, after a moment, in a tired voice, "they went away. Oh, if you can imagine how awful it was, to be helpless here, knowing

that only I could warn of this monstrous thing."

"You are a very great help to us, *gnädige Frau*," the major said warmly. "Now, can you tell us one thing—did you see anyone besides Stuhl?"

"No," she answered, "but I heard their voices. I recognized the voices of Wilhelm Kleinbauer and Karl Siebold of Dorthenheim." She shook her head. "I had trusted both of them!"

"One other thing, Frau Becker," the major said. "About what time did they leave?"

"That I can tell you, from the clock on the wall, there. It was at seven fifteen that they left the house. After that—I do not know."

"That's very interesting, Frau Becker," Sergeant Pepper said cheerfully. When she looked at him questioningly, he said: "You see, we arrested Herr Kleinbauer and Herr Siebold at the fertilizer works at a quarter to six. We've had them in jail in Frankfurt since about eight. It's hard for us to see, naturally, just how they could have been *here* at seven-fifteen."

Her face had gone green-white in the light of the ceiling bulb. Her lips were parted and she seemed to be trying to speak, but no sounds came out.

The plump major planted himself in front of her, his legs apart. "Now, Frau Becker," he snapped, in German, "you had better tell the truth. You were the accomplice of those men you say you 'overheard'—their accomplice—or their leader?"

When she did not reply, he pressed on: "It was your plan to blow up the old fertilizer factory and plenty of Americans with it!"

Frau Irma Becker found her voice at last. "I don't know what you're talking about," she said coldly, but her lips were trembling.

"Why?" the major pursued relentlessly. "I'll tell you, Frau Becker. It was because there is somebody here in Dorthenheim at this very moment, someone for whom this place has become very dangerous because of *your* blundering. If the factory were to blow up, killing many of us, it would create great confusion; in the excitement, that 'somebody' might slip away unnoticed."

"You talk in riddles." She was calmer.

"There will be no riddles in a moment. Stuhl was to come to us with his story. We were then, Frau Becker, supposed to go to the factory with a force of troops. We would have found it booby-trapped, and—" he gestured—"pouf!"

"All this is nonsense," Irma Becker said.

"What was nonsense," the major said, "was the foolish murder of an American soldier who came too close to the factory gate today, by one of your stupid friends. Except for that, your plan might—I say it *might* have worked. What you didn't know, Frau Becker, was that we had moved in on the factory already—never mind why, just now. You couldn't know, because of the curfew."

"You believed the explosives were in place, ready to blow. So, you

sent Stuhl to us, according to your original plan, curfew or no curfew."

"After," he added, "you had made Stuhl tie you up here, to give *you* a way out, just in case things went wrong."

The woman sat in stony silence. The major looked hard at her and she dropped her eyes to her lap.

"I am Major Lawrence, Counter Intelligence Corps," he said, presently, "I advise you to be frank with me."

He waited another moment, then asked "Where have you got Ernst Gortmann hidden?"

It was too much for Frau Irma Becker. Face white and contorted with fury, she sprang at him, hands upraised to strike.

"Lies!" she screamed hoarsely. "Lies, lies, all lies!"

Sergeant Pepper had her before she could reach the officer. He pinioned her arms at her sides and held her writhing figure in a tight grip.

Abruptly, she ceased to struggle. "I don't know what you're talking about," she gasped dully. "I don't know what you're talking about," she repeated, as if by rote.

Pepper let her go, watching her narrowly, and she tucked in a loose strand of brown hair and settled her clothing.

"We know Gortmann is in this house," the major said, "and we'll take it apart, stick by stick, if you make it necessary."

He turned to Sergeant Pepper. "All right, Sergeant, call in your boys."

"Sir," Pepper said, "Why don't we take a quick look around before we start tearing the place up? It might not be necessary." When the major nodded, he touched the woman's arm. "You will precede me, Frau Becker. We will try this floor first."

A search of the ground floor rooms of the house—parlor, kitchen, dining-room and scullery—failed to produce results. While Sergeant Pepper went over the walls and flooring, Irma Becker watched expressionlessly.

"Now," Pepper said brightly, "the cellar."

"The door is there," Frau Becker said, pointing.

The cellar extended the length of the house. It was walled in with field-stone to above the height of a man's head. Several square stone columns supported the weight of the house above and cast slanting black shadows. There was a rich musty smell as of stored root-vegetables, as well as a faint savor of sourish wine.

"Rutabagas," the sergeant said, sniffing.

He switched on an electric torch and began an inspection of the cellar. The major began his own inspection. Captain Traeger stood behind Frau Becker.

There was a sort of wooden bin at one end of the cellar, evidently the receptacle for the rutabagas. Odd lengths of lumber and a worn twig broom leaned against the stone pillars; along part of one side was a rack partly filled with slender, dusty wine bottles. A few empty bottles were ranged along the floor at the base of the rack.

The sergeant worked slowly around the chamber; he got a spade from one corner and tossed the rutabagas out into the earthen floor to see whether or not anything lay hidden underneath them. He examined the floor itself minutely.

Frau Irma Becker watched wordlessly. Once she turned and looked up into Captain Traegers face. The Captain flushed and looked away.

At the end of twenty minutes the sergeant reached the wine-bottle rack. Leaning down, he shot the beam of his torch in among the cobwebby spaces of its light timber construction, peering at the wall behind it.

"Damned poor wine, this, I'd say by the smell," the sergeant said. He shot the light in at each level of the rack.

Finally he straightened up and half turned away, his nose wrinkling. He stood a moment as though he were thinking. Suddenly he turned back again, threw off his helmet, and thrusting his head right in among the dusty bottles, sniffed loudly. He emerged wearing a crown of cobwebs, and straightened up, brushing at them.

"That wall," he said, casually, "must be one, two hundred years old, anyway. You wouldn't think the mortar would smell fresh that long, would you?"

The captain uttered an exclamation.

"But it does," Sergeant Pepper said positively. "Give me a hand with this, would you, Captain?"

They jockeyed the rack, bottles and all, away from the wall.

"Watch her, major!" the sergeant suddenly yelled.

The woman had followed the business of the bottle-rack with widening eyes. As the sergeant shouted, she made a break toward the cellar stairs. The major, with an agility to which his rotundity gave no clue, beat her to them, and caught her by the wrists.

He grinned at the stream of curses she spat out at him.

"The Nazis taught 'em a few things besides kirche, kuche, kinder," he chuckled. "Hold onto her, Captain; Sergeant, call in the boys. Looks like that piece of wall is hotter than the hinges of hell."

His voice shook a little with excitement. As Pepper ran up the stairs, he scratched at the mortar between the rough gray stones. He grinned, and hit the spot with his pistol-butt. It rang hollow and reverberating.

Half a dozen soldiers came crowding down the narrow stairs after the sergeant. Two took Frau Becker in hand. The others, under the direction of Pepper, attacked the mortar between the stones with the points of their bayonets.

A stone wobbled, was loosened. A soldier worked it to and fro and it finally struck the floor with a thud.

Blackness showed behind the aperture it revealed.

There was a muffled, scraping sound behind the wall, as of movement in the black hole. Sergeant Pepper yelled again and threw himself to one side. The next instant there was a spurt of flame from the hole and the dull roar of a shot. Across

the room, Frau Becker, in the line of fire, groaned and staggered in a GI's grasp.

Moving quickly and coolly, the major snatched a fragmentation grenade from the belt of a soldier and started to pull the pin. Then he shook his head regretfully and gave it back to the man.

"They'll want the snake alive," he muttered. "Wouldn't it be fun, though, to shove it in that hole?"

THE MAJOR SET down his coffee mug and smacked his lips.

"Coffee never tastes so good as right after a night raid. Especially," he added, "a successful one."

"They tell me the woman died about a half hour ago," he added laconically. "There was a very bad dish of stuff, that one."

Captain Traeger sat rather glumly watching the hills over the river lighten in the dawn. "I still don't know," he said to the sergeant, "how you knew enough to insist we put the arm on the fertilizer works yesterday afternoon."

"Well, sir," Pepper said slowly, "I'm a farm boy, Captain. I know fertilizer when I smell it and I smell it on one of those sardine cans we found on the island. When I learned there was a fertilizer works here in town, I figured we had it made."

"That sniff of fertilizer was the key to the business, all right," the major said jovially.

"Of course," the sergeant said, "Gortmann was the man who'd been using the lean-to."

"And my friend Frau Becker," the

captain said, wincing, "was going to use her cows as a pretext for getting him off the island legitimately. Wait, though; where does August Ley fit in . . . ?"

"Pretty simple, I think," Pepper said. "Ley had been hanging around Stuhl's barn; maybe he knew too much. Stuhl was using the place to signal the island. Well, they had to get rid of Ley. That was the reason for Stuhl coming here with that phony yarn about Ley's cow. *That* set a red herring on Ley. Then he went back and killed him and made it

look like just a simple neighborhood feud."

"It doesn't do poor Dukes a bit of good," the captain said sadly.

"Well," the major said briskly, "I've got to get back to Frankfurt and write out a report. There's a colonel up there, sergeant, who's waiting impatiently to take the credit for what you've done here."

He put on his cap and chuckled. "This is one case where the law really 'sniffed out' the culprits, eh, sergeant?"

Add to Seldom Heard Remarks By Movie Stars To Supporting Players: "This is your scene. I'll play it with my back to the camera. Give it all you've got." The line is Merle Oberon's, who played the original *Frau Becker* in the SUSPENSE radio play on which *A SENSE OF SMELL* was based. She said it to the late Laird Cregar, who also starred on SUSPENSE.

Postscript to

A Sense of Smell

During the month of May, 1945, a German woman came to the 70th Infantry Division authorities in her small Rhine River town with a rather unusual request. She wanted permission to transport a bull to an island in the Rhine where her seven cows were.

At that time Roby Wentz, who wrote the adaptation of *A SENSE OF SMELL*, was an editor of the 70th Division "Trailblazer". He headlined the story "KRAUT BULL GETS PASS TO SEVEN-COW PARIS", the Division chuckled over it, and forgot it. When the time came to write *A SENSE OF SMELL*, however, Wentz recalled the incident and made use of it in the story.

If the German settings and the GI lingo in the story ring true to readers who were in what is gently called "the service", it's because the writer was there himself. As a non-com with the 70th, he was well steeped in postwar Germany.

He swears there actually was an outfit in the 70th in which officers and men ate their meals together — the medical detachment of the 276th Infantry Regiment, stationed for awhile in Braunfels, near Wetzlar. Whether it was or wasn't good for morale, he doesn't know.

The Portuguese sardines in the story originated in a Saarbrücken mine which Nazi SS men vacated about 45 minutes ahead of Counter Intelligence operatives in April, 1945. Among its ample food stocks, indicating plans for extensive guerilla warfare in the American rear, were hundreds of tins of the sardines. "And very good they were, too," the author recalls.